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CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE FOOD, JOURNEYS, AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF THE ECONOMY OF THE ABIPONES.

222 The wild Abipones live like wild beasts. They 224 neither sow, nor reap, nor take any heed of [241] agriculture. Taught by natural instinct, the instructions of their ancestors, and their own [82] experience, they are acquainted with all the productions of the earth and the trees, at what part of the year they spontaneously grow, what animals are to be found in what places, and what arts are to be employed in taking them. 421 All things are in common with them. They have no proprietors, as with us, of lands, rivers, and groves, who possess the exclusive right of hunting, fishing, and gathering wood there. Whatever flies in the air, swims in the water, and grows wild in the woods, may become the property of the first person that chooses to take it. The Abipones are unacquainted with spades, [411 223] ploughs, and axes; the arrow, the spear, the club, and horses, are the only instruments they make use of in procuring food, clothing, and 221 habitation. As all lands do not bear all things, and as various productions grow at various

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No woman will set out on a journey without a stake like a palm branch, broad at each side and slender in the middle, made of very hard wood, and about two ells long, which serves admirably for digging eatable roots, knocking down fruits from trees, and dry boughs for lighting a fire, and even for breaking the heads and arms of enemies, if they meet any by the way. With this luggage, which you would think a camel could hardly carry, are the women's horses loaded in every journey. But this is not all. You often see two or three women or girls seated on one horse: not from any scarcity of beasts, all having plenty, but because they are sworn enemies to solitude and silence. As few horses will bear more than one rider, unless accustomed to it, they immediately throw the female trio, but generally without doing them any injury, except that these Amazons, when seen sprawling like snails upon the ground, excite the mirth of the spectators, and amidst mutual laughter, try to scramble again on to the rustic steed, as often as they are thrown off.

The company of women is attended by a vast number of dogs. As soon as they are mounted, they all look round, and if one be missing out of the many which they keep, begin to call him with their usual *nè nè nè*, repeated as loud as possible a hundred times, till at last they see them all assembled.

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●231 times, till at last they see them all assembled. I often wondered how, without being able to count, they could so instantly tell if one were missing out of so large a pack. Nor should [324] they be censured for their anxiety about their dogs; for these animals, in travelling, serve as purveyors, being employed, like hounds, to hunt deer, otters, and emus. It is chiefly on this account that every family keeps a great number of dogs, which are supported without any trouble; plenty of provender being always supplied by the heads, hearts, livers, and entrails of the slaughtered cattle; which, though made use of by Europeans, are rejected by the savages. The fecundity of these animals in Paraguay corresponds to the abundance of victuals. They scarce ever bring forth fewer than twelve puppies at a birth. When the period of parturition draws nigh, they dig a very deep burrow, furnished with a narrow opening, and therein securely deposit their young. The descent is so artfully contrived with turnings and windings, that, however rainy the weather may be, no water can penetrate to this subterranean cave. The mother comes out every day to get food and drink, when she moans and wags her tail as if to excuse her absence to her master; at length, at the end of many days, she shows her whelps abroad, though she cer-

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tainly cannot boast of their beauty: for the Indian dogs have no elegance of form, they are generally middle-sized, and of various colours, as with us. They are neither so small as the dogs of Malta and Bologna, nor so large as mastiffs. You never see any of those shaggy curly dogs, which are so fond of the water, and so docile, except amongst the Spaniards, who have them sent over in European ships. But though the Indian dogs do not excel in beauty, they are by no means inferior to those of Europe in quickness of scent, in activity, vigilance, and sincere affection for their masters. In every Abiponian colony, some hundred dogs keep continual watch, and by the terrible howling and barking which they nightly utter in chorus, at the slightest motion, perpetually disturbed our sleep, but never secured us from being surprized by the enemy; a troop of whom would often steal into the colony, whilst the whole of the dogs maintained a profound silence. Yet none of the Abipones ever blamed them, foolishly imagining them bewitched by the magic arts of the enemy's jugglers. It may be reckoned amongst the blessings of Paraguay, that it is unacquainted with madness in dogs, or any kind of cattle, and that hydrophobia is unknown here. This must be accounted a singular benefit of Providence, and one of the wonders of nature

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231 in a country where beasts are frequently distressed both with the burning heat of heaven, and with long thirst, for want of water, which is not to be got for many leagues. But let us now take leave of the female riders, and of the dogs that accompany them, and direct our attention to the Abipones, their husbands.

484 The luggage being all committed to the women, the Abipones travel armed with a spear alone, that they may be disengaged to 224 fight or hunt, if occasion require. If they spy 484 any emus, deer, stags, boars, or other wild animals, they pursue them with swift horses, and kill them with a spear. If they can meet with nothing fit to kill and eat, they set fire to the plain which is covered with tall dry grass, and force the animals, concealed underneath, to leap out by crowds, and in flying from the fire to fall into the cruel hands of the Indians, who [253] kill them with wood, iron, or a string, and afterwards roast them. Should every thing else be wanting, the plains abound in rabbits, to afford a breakfast, dinner, or supper. To 372 strike fire, they have no occasion for either 484 flint or steel, the place of which is supplied by pieces of wood, about a span long, one of which is soft, the other hard. The first, which is a little pierced in the middle, is placed underneath; the harder wood, which has a point

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of their tent, that the waters may flow off, and be carried elsewhere. They generally send a tame mare with a bell about her neck to a drove of horses, when they are sent to pasture; for they will never go out of sight of her, and if dispersed up and down the plain, through fear of a tiger, return to her as to their mother; on which account the Spaniards call this mare *la madrina*, and the Abipones, *latè*, which means a mother. For the same reason, on a few of the horses they place shackles of soft leather, that they may crop the grass without wandering far from the tent, and be at hand, if it be found necessary to travel in the night. Not only the men, but even very young women cross rivers without ford, bridge, or boat, by swimming. The children, the saddles, and other luggage are sent over on a bull's hide, called by the Abipones, *ñatatè*, and by the Spaniards, *la pelota*, and generally made use of in crossing the smaller rivers. I will describe the rude structure of it. A hairy, raw, and entirely undressed hide is made almost square, by having the extremities of the feet and neck cut off. The four sides are raised like a hat, to the height of about two spans, and each is tied with a thong, that they may remain erect, and preserve their squareness of form. At the bottom of the pelota, the saddles and other luggage are

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santly as others would on the green turf. How often have I crossed those tremendous rivers sitting on a hide in the midst of them! You would have called them so many Neptunes, so familiar were they with the water. Their boldness exceeds the belief of Europeans. Whenever they had a mind to go from St. Ferdinand to Corrientes, they swam across that vast sea, which is composed of the united streams of the great Paraguay and the great Parana, with their horses swimming beside them, to the great astonishment of the Spaniards: for in this part the river is formidable to ships even, from its width, depth, and incredible rapidity, and often filled myself and my companions with terror when we sailed upon it, whilst I resided in that colony. Formerly those savage plunderers, whenever they hastened home with a great number of beasts taken from the Spaniards, prudently crossed this immense river towards the South, going from island to island; by which means they had time to recruit themselves and their beasts, after the fatigue of swimming, in each of the islands. It will be worth while to describe the manner in which many thousands of horses, mules, and oxen, are sent across great rivers to the opposite shore. The herd of beasts is not all driven by one person, but divided into companies, each of

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231 484 which is inclosed behind and on both sides, by men on horseback, to keep them from running away: to prevent which, some erect two hedges, wider at the beginning, and narrower at the shore itself, through which the beasts are driven, so that more than two or three cannot enter the river at a time. The tame oxen and horses are sent first into the water, and the wild ones follow without delay. Great care must be taken, that they be not deprived of the power of swimming, by being too much crowded. Behind and on both sides the beasts are watched by Indians, either swimming, or conveyed in a little bark, that they may make straight for the opposite shore: for when left alone, they suffer themselves to be carried down by the stream, and float to those places which forbid all access, on account of the high banks, marshes, or trees, by which they are impeded. If an ox or a horse be whirled round in swimming, it will be sucked up by the water, unable to exert itself any longer. To prevent this, the Abipones, even in the midst of the river, mount those oxen, that are either sluggish or refractory, and taking hold of their horns with both hands, sit upon their backs, striking their sides with both feet, till, in spite of themselves, they are guided to the opposite shore. When arrived at land, fear gives way to rage,

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and they attack every thing that comes in their way, with their threatening horns. You will hardly believe that I always found fierce bulls less dexterous in crossing rivers, than cows, which, on account of the greater timidity of their nature, are more obedient to the driver, and strain more eagerly to the shore. Oxen tied by the horns to a tolerably large boat often swim across in perfect security: for as the heads of the animals are suspended on each side the boat, their bodies scarcely find any difficulty in swimming. In this manner I sent twenty oxen at a time from the estate, to the colony of the Rosary, across the river Paraguay. More or fewer oxen may be tied to the bark, according to the size of it. Sometimes the herd of beasts is surrounded by long barks or skiffs on every side, lest, when weary of swimming, they should float down with the stream, and wander from that part of the shore that had been fixed on for their ascent. But the Abipones, not needing these precautions of the Spaniards, could successfully transport crowds of swimming oxen across any rivers, themselves swimming beside them. This expertness of the Abipones in swimming across rivers, I have long desired to see in European armies, which are often prevented from attacking the enemy, by the intervention of some

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The Abipones surround the neck of a dog that has been bitten by a serpent with ostrich feathers, and they told me that their ancestors looked upon that as a remedy.

The Portugueze extol the *piedra de cobra*, which is of a grey, and sometimes of a black colour, and of various sizes, as the magnet of poisons: for in the same manner that loadstone attracts iron, this stone, when applied to a wound, absorbs all the venom. That it may serve again for the same purpose it is immersed in milk, into which the poison is discharged. The ancient physicians thought garlick an excellent remedy for venomous bites. The efficacy of this plant against poisons was proved by an experiment of my own. A Guarany, as he was working in the garden, was bitten in the foot by a hairy spider, such as I have described, and imprudently neglected to mention the circumstance. The poison beginning to operate, he felt his thigh swell, with pain in the stomach, and suspecting his danger, came to me for advice. I ordered a little beef broth to be boiled with plenty of garlick, which taken by the sick man immediately repressed the poison, the swelling, and the pain. Nor am I averse to the prescription of Dioscorides, who thinks that radish juice should be drunk on these occasions. The ancients have advised washing the hands

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727 766 less they have lost their leader. Then indeed they return with their hair partially shaven, to attest their grief, and convey the bones of their deceased Cacique home, not without funeral apparatus. The anxiously expected return of 727 the warriors engages the eyes, ears, tongues, and hands of all; some surveying the droves of cattle, the captives, and spoils; others enquiring for the safety of their relations; others examining the wounds of the soldiers; and all the women lamenting. Each retains the captives, horses, mules, and other things that he has taken, unless, as usual amongst them, he chooses to share them with his friends. From one journey they often bring home many thousand horses, which they divide amongst themselves, with what regulations I know not, but without any disputes. On the succeeding days every [231] one is eager to make trial of the horses which have fallen to his share in the partition of the spoils; they value swiftness alone, disregarding every beauty which adorns a horse. You may [541] daily see a crowd of young men riding races with one another, and at the same time contending with words, each extolling his own above his neighbour's horse. The remembrance of the victory obtained over the enemy, disturbs as much as it delights their minds; for they live in continual fear that the enemy will